

Kyodan

News Letter

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN JAPAN
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RESTORATION OF DIALOGUE

Major Events - 1970

Tokyo Union Theological
Seminary Issue

No. 42*

Postponement of Kyodan
General Assembly

Nos. 41, 42, 44, 47

Issue of Ministerial
Examinations

Nos. 40, 47

First Okinawa Seminar

No. 40

Completion of New
Curriculum

New Action against
Yasukuni Legislation

No. 44

New Japan Christian
Center

No. 47

the avoidance of dialogue on the part of one or both sides. We may say that it is a lack of dialogue, or escape from dialogue or, if you prefer, flight from dialogue. It is a lack of the courage to engage in dialogue.

What is man? Man is an animal that possesses word-ability. But not just words for monologue. Words are essentially tools of conversation. They are the unique means by which man carries on living relationships with other men. Ours is a life existence made possible by dialogue. By talking, one gives expression to his inner self; through listening he accepts the other person.

In the universities of the Middle Ages, academic dialogue took the form of debate. And this continues today in all European universities as a vestige of that tradition, as seen in the screening examinations for degrees and the installation lectures given by professors.

Erasmus has said that a debate between persons holding differing opinions brings forth the basic light of truth.

But the danger in this debate-form is that instead of beginning by confronting an issue that is to be resolved by common action and consultation, a personal position is announced and the end result is an insistence on main-

* refers to issue of Kyodan News Letter in which item appears

taining that position. What is commonly agreed upon is defeated by an emphasis on the differences. Therefore, this is what it is necessary to confront. However, real dialogue must begin with hearing. It must begin with common participation directed toward the problem at hand.

Once this basic principle has been established, debate and confrontation will not be viewed as something fearful and abhorrent.

Instead of bemoaning the lack of trust, let us begin, in all areas, to resurrect feelings of trust by engaging in open-hearted talks and careful listening. The significant events of 1971 will begin with the Restoration of Dialogue.

Rev. Eichi Amemiya, Higashi Asagaya Church, Tokyo
Kyodan Shimpo, December 26, 1970

SECOND OKINAWA SEMINAR MARKED BY FRANK EXCHANGE

How do you overcome the victim-assailant relationship? How do you resolve accuser-accused struggles? Okinawa, which comprises a group of small islands of a total land area of 2,363 square kilometers and which lies between hondo (the mainland of Japan) and Taiwan, is the focus of these questions for thoughtful Japanese. Mainlanders have felt themselves to be both assailants and accused, and Okinawans have understood themselves to be both victims and accusers. Could the unification of The United Church of Okinawa and The United Church of Christ in Japan conquer these attitudes?

No, to the extent that Okinawa is still separate from the hondo and under U.S. military control and, accordingly, the war is not over in Okinawa! Yes, to the extent that the unification of the churches has clearly been grasped by Christians as the realization of the Confession of War Responsibility of the Kyodan. This is of course just the beginning of a continuing struggle that is part and parcel of the mission of the church in Japan.

To discover the true mission of the Kyodan regarding "occupied" Okinawa, the Kyodan Commission on the Mission of the Church sponsored the Second Okinawa Problems Study Seminar over the New Year's holidays. Thirty people from hondo joined fifty from Okinawa in a meeting held Jan. 1-5 at the Okinawa Christian Junior College.

In the opening worship service, Rev. Shigeaki Kinjo, Moderator of the Okinawa district, chose as his text, Phil. 2:6 ff. He emphasized that the important point is that Jesus "took the nature of a servant" and ministered to real human need. He said, "The task of Okinawa is not to become a base for destruction but to become the basis on which to make Japan and the world truly alive."

Reviewing the whirlpool of problems in which the Kyodan has been caught up during the past two years, Rev. Toru Takakura, General Secretary of the Kyodan, in his opening address, turned to the Okinawa church for help and new insights on the problems. "The Okinawa church," he said, "can call us back from our over-fascination with material things, superficial success and the leisure boom to the realization that our present prosperity is built on an unreal and precarious balance between military threats and counterthreats, a condition that often demands the sacrifice of those very defenseless little ones for whom Christ was most concerned."

Prof. Yoshio Inoue of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary, who is chairman of the Kyodan Committee on Social Concerns and a leading figure in the Japanese Christian Peace Movement, said that neglecting to include Okinawa in the scope of the peace movement means that the movement itself has erred. Rev. Ryuichi Naka, chairman of the Okinawa district Committee on the Mission of the Church, pointed out the Okinawans' inclination to compromise with power and authority. He urged them to clarify their self-understanding by drawing up a sokatsu (critical summary) of their past history so that they can demonstrate the way of peace and wellbeing.

These presentations gave all participants in the Seminar a sense of direction as to how to fulfill their responsibility as Christians in the present complex and difficult world situation. Participants felt that for the first time they were able to criticize and question each other frankly, and to express their opinions as to what Christians in each place can do.

NEW KYODAN STATISTICS ANALYZED

New statistics for the Kyodan covering the year ending March 30, 1970, as published in the new Kyodan Nenkan (Yearbook), show a total membership of 205,031 in 1,654 churches and preaching points, with a total of 2,067 active ministers serving in churches and other capacities.¹ Membership and number of pastors have increased slightly from the previous year while the number of churches is one less than a year previous. But a downward trend has been evident over the past several years in three important categories: active membership, average church attendance and baptisms.

	Active Membership	Church Attendance	Baptisms
1966	106,215	54,311	6,257*
1967	105,412	53,471	4,142
1968	105,185	52,494	4,365
1969	104,193	50,180	4,057*

*a 12-month period in which two Easter Sundays occurred

Rev. Kichiya Kikuchi, chairman of the Commission on Mission, recently analyzed the reasons for the downward trend and suggested steps that should be taken to reverse the trend. He attributes the decline in active membership, attendance and baptisms to three major causes:

1. The heavy movement of people from the country to the city, and the failure of city churches to assimilate and serve them;
2. The leisure boom, in the midst of which people have little interest in the church or religion, and campus struggles, which have absorbed the time and interest of young people;
3. The present crisis within the Kyodan.

Migration from the country to the city has been taking place at a rapid rate. The population of the southern island of Kyushu has decreased 18 per cent in recent years, the population of Shikoku 34 per cent. Yet in spite of the fact that population has been flowing into the cities, districts like Tokyo, Osaka, Hyogo, with large urban concentrations, are recording decreases. "City

¹See Statistical Report attached.

churches are not doing a good job of evangelism," says Kikuchi, himself pastor of Shitaya Church near Ueno Station in Tokyo. "On the other hand, smaller churches are holding their own in spite of the exodus to the city," he says, pointing out that Hokkai and Tohoku districts are not decreasing. "They are doing a good job."

"The problem lies in the self-centeredness of city churches," claims Kikuchi. "Each church has been doing the best it can, independent of others. City churches must begin to plan together for unified evangelism efforts."

In a leisure-oriented society

Kikuchi feels that in the present mood of Japan, which is highly oriented to leisure, the general public has little interest in religion or the church. At the same time, students, who ordinarily constitute a major portion of many congregations, have been caught up in campus struggles.

In the face of the impact of the leisure boom, Kikuchi emphasizes that "the church must always be the church and must speak to society as the church." He says that many young people come into the church before they have really entered society at large. When they do move into society, they tend to be swept along by it instead of being able to withstand its pressures. Kikuchi feels the Kyodan must formulate a more comprehensive approach to society and social problems, broadening the base of its concerns beyond the issues like Yasukuni Shrine and the immigration bill, with which it is now involved.

There are those who view the downward trend somewhat differently, feeling the problem is not the lack of interest in religion, but rather is the church's failure to realize and speak to what the real needs of young people are.

"Where there is unity, the church grows naturally"

As a third reason for the decline, Kikuchi referred to the present crisis in the Kyodan. He dates this from the Confession of War Responsibility, made in 1967, with Expo '70 being the issue that brought the differences in opinion into the open.

Kikuchi maintains that the crisis within the Kyodan, which he describes as a lack of unity, is not over whether the church should be involved in social issues but how it should be involved. "Since World War II, most Christians have agreed that the pre-war church was too shackled to the government, and that the church should speak not only to individuals but to society as well," he says. He feels there is still wide support for the position taken in the Fundamental Policy for Mission that the church must be an "open", not a "closed" church.

"In the present crisis," concludes Kikuchi, "it is not the church that suffers, it is society!"

The Kyodan is not alone in experiencing a statistical recession. The Japan Anglican Church has reported a decrease in total membership; for several years the Roman Catholic Church has been concerned over the "evaporation" of members, when they move from rural parishes to the large cities.

what has been --- IN THE KYODAN --- what is to be

I. Coming Events

Anti-Yasukuni nationalization demonstrations and hunger strikes planned for Feb. 11-March 10 (Shimpo 1/23)

Prof. Saburo Ienaga to speak on freedom of thought in present-day Japan at public meeting on Feb. 11--National Foundation Day (Shimpo 1/2)

Consultation for rural church members of five districts to be held Feb. 1-2 (Shimpo 1/23)

Waseda Hoshien Student Center to sponsor Okinawa Student Seminar March 13-19 (Shimpo 1/23)

II. Ecumenical Activities

Ecumenical Week of Prayer being observed in many local meetings Jan. 18-25 (Shimbun 1/16)

Kyodan (national and district level)

Standing Committee meets Jan. 18. (Tsushin 1/15)

Tokyo district executive committee meets 1/12, re possibility of holding general assembly (Tsushin 1/8); will meet with sub-district officers 1/19 seeking unanimous support for assembly, proposal (Tsushin 1/12)

Okinawa

Mainland Christians join Okinawans in New Year's Seminar in Okinawa (Shimpo 1/23, Shimbun 1/16, News Letter 1/20)

Moderator of Okinawa district sends letter to U.S. High Comm. Lampert on Koza incident (Shimpo 1/23)

Okinawa Misato Church demonstrates in demand for safe removal of poison gas (Shimbun 1/16)

Overseas

Moderator Ii attends WCC Central Committee meeting in Addis Ababa with NCC General Secretary Nakajima

Prof. Iizaka goes with Japan religious mission to Vietnam to investigate possibilities for peace and reconstruction (Shimbun 12/25)

Social Concerns

Offerings to Seirei-en Nursing Home for the Elderly A-Bomb Victims in Hiroshima amounted to ¥40 million as of Dec. 15 (Shimpo 12/26)

Land problem at Seirei-en site is settled (Shimpo 1/2)

Seirei-en groundbreaking Jan. 31. (Shimpo 1/23)

Anti-Yasukuni nationalization group sends appeal to churches for persons to join hunger strike (Shimpo 12/26)

Offerings for East Pakistan exceed ¥4 million as of Dec. 23 (Tsushin 12/30)

Rev. Munakata in Brazil sends petition with 174 signatures against Yasukuni nationalization (Shimbun 1/16, Shimpo 1/23)
see also "Okinawa"

Shimpo Kyodan weekly / Shimbun=Kirisuto Shimbun weekly / Tsushin=Christian daily

News Letter = English monthly

*For further information, check sources or write the News Letter